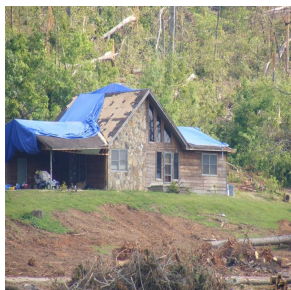


# The Tornadoes

175 mph winds blew communities closer



## New Catoosa office:

**Catoosa County  
DFCS  
700 City Hall Drive  
Fort Oglethorpe, GA  
30742**

## **Office Numbers:**

**706-866-1740  
706-866-1789  
706-866-4167  
FAX: 706-866-4916**

Hurricane season officially began June 1st. Here are some tips that could help make your family safer.

*Know your family's vulnerability to storm surge, flooding and wind.*

*Identify the safest area in your house for each hurricane hazard.*

*Determine escape routes and places to meet just in case you're separated.*

*Have an out-of-state friend as the family contact so there is a single point of contact.*

*Make a plan now for what to do with your pets if you have to evacuate.*

*Place emergency numbers by the phone and teach children how and when to call 911.*

*Stock non-perishable emergency supplies.*

*Use a NOAA weather radio and replace batteries every 6 months.*

*Take first aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes.*



They needed us ....



and we were there.



We are committed to help make it better



## At-A-Glance

April 27 Severe storms moved into the state causing extensive damage in Bartow, Catoosa, Coweta, Dade, Floyd, Green, Lamar, Meriweather, Monroe, Morgan, Pickens, Polk, Rabun, Spalding, Troup and Walker counties. The Catoosa County DFCS office was demolished.

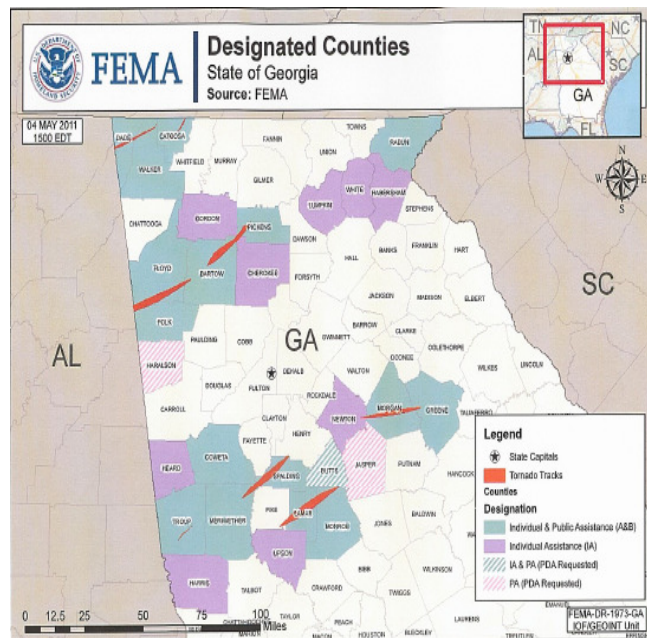
April 28 GEMA activates State Operations Center (SOC). DFCS & Red Cross activates the Emergency Services Function #6-sheltering (ESF6). Nine shelters are opened.

April 29 DFCS emergency hotline is activated.

April 30 Georgia declared a 'Major Disaster' making federal funds available.

May 12-19 Disaster Food Stamps (D-SNAP) in 9 counties.

May 16 Official opening of the Joint Field Operations.



## Our efforts by the number . . .

Georgia approved 4726 households, which included 13,847 individuals in these households for a total of \$2,366,701 benefits.

Supplemental benefits to active Food Stamp households were issued to 17,117 households for a total of \$2,973,658.



## Heroes ....

We are proud to say there are many heroes! From the staff in Region 1 that had to pitch in to get the job done, like those in Catoosa County that manned shelters, saw clients, called to check on children that are in our care and volunteered at the church to deliver food. And those that staffed the Disaster Food Stamp Program and the Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) in all of the counties that we're affected. And let's also take our hats off to those who happily picked up the work of their fellow co-workers – doubling their workload, as their peers went to volunteer – they are heroes! There are many incredible stories of heroism that came out of these devastating storms that will continue to be told for many years to come. We take our hats off to every last person who stepped up – in any way – to help make things a little better for those who really needed us. You're nothing short of incredible. Thank you.



## What we learned

- First and Foremost, ensure the safety of all staff.
- Immediately gather information about how staff and their immediate families might have been impacted by the disaster. Were they injured? Were their homes damaged? Did they have relatives who were impacted (injured, property loss, etc.)?
- Ensure there is a plan in place to address the emotional needs of staff.
- Ensure there is a plan in place to check on the safety and well-being of all children in the custody of the department.
- When possible, coordinate regional staff to arrive on site to assess damage and establish a process for securing sensitive information. Discuss and coordinate with State Office staff as soon as possible.
- Ensure there is a plan in place to secure all sensitive data (case files, computers, etc.).
- Purge records regularly to reduce need to unnecessarily move expired files.
- Contact local National Guard to request assistance with recovery and packing of items, moving of files, etc.
- If required, secure short-term storage (PODS, local storage facilities, etc.) and coordinate with Regional Accounting.
- County Director should maintain constant contact with DFCS Emergency Management Team around mass shelter needs. Will there be shelters opening? If so, how many and what is the need/role for local county staff? Regional staff may need to coordinate shelter coverage from other county offices in the region.
- Immediately following the disaster/event, assign regional FPS to assist with working shelters, Disaster Recovery Centers, and facility recovery/clean-up effort.
- Immediately following the disaster/event, start coordinating assistance/volunteers from other county offices to assist with facility recovery/clean-up effort.
- Maintain hard copies and/or soft copies on laptops of placement resources in case SHINES is not available.
- Ensure there is a plan in place for child welfare business to continue uninterrupted or immediately brought back to normal (CPS Intake, etc.).
- Ensure there is a plan in place for economic support to continue within the first 72 hours after the event.
- Establish a plan for securing alternative workspace for staff (i.e., relocating staff to other county offices, staff working from home, etc.).
- If an alternate site is required, immediately contact DFCS Division Director and/or Chief of Staff to work with DHS Facility Management in securing new space. Since county staff will probably be most familiar with area, try to maintain a list of longer-term temporary space in the city to recommend to DHS Facility Management.
- After the first 30 days post-disaster/event, reevaluate the longer-term needs of the affected office and staff, then request support from the Region and/or State Office.
- Maintain current Business Continuity Plans (updated annually) and include agreements or processes for securing temporary storage and office space (contacting DHS Facility Management via DFCS Division Director and/or Chief of Staff).
- Establish strong relationships with local Red Cross, GEMA Director and county officials and keep their contact information handy (at home, cell phone, etc.).
- Establish strong relationships with the faith-based community. County Directors do not need to wait for a disaster to form these relationships!!!
- County Directors should fully participate in local Emergency Management meetings.
- Do not assume that a disaster/event will only impact your office. It may totally devastate the town or city where the county office is located.

## Kathy Herren

First and foremost, I am extremely proud of how so many employees were ready to jump in and give 100% to help ease the stress of the many people that were devastated during the tornado and severe weather. Many of the volunteers were ready to start early and end late, and they were ready to do whatever was asked of them. I want to personally say thank you. And as proud as I am about the work we did as team and with our partners, I am also saddened by loss and devastation many of our communities have had to withstand. I will not forget what I saw with my eyes and experienced with my heart; people coming together trying to dig a path back to normalcy - how bitter sweet.



## Brad Pasto

What impacted me most about our efforts after this disaster was our ability to respond quickly, as well as our extreme flexibility to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances and needs. We marshaled our resources with our partners GEMA and Red Cross, and we were able to help many people in a time when they needed it most. I'm proud of the work that was done on behalf of our fellow Georgia citizens.

## Kevin Hamlett

In response to the severe storms and tornadoes impacting Georgia, the overall DHS response and recovery effort was nothing less than magnificent! From the onset, DFCS employees were on site assisting families in 9 evacuation shelters – servicing 16 counties across the state.

Immediately after the storms subsided, the DFCS Emergency Hotline was activated – tracking the movement of foster children in our care and providing information to callers on the various types of assistance provided throughout the state. In stellar fashion, DHS employees staffed FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers, as staggered openings started the day after President Obama's official "Major Disaster" declaration. And with flawless execution, DFCS rolled out the Disaster Food Stamps program (D-SNAP) in a total of 25 Georgia counties – without incident.

Worthy of special mention is the "*response excellence*" demonstrated in Catoosa County, where the DFCS facility in Ringgold was totally destroyed. The responsiveness and teaming of County, Regional and State Office DFCS staff; with State and Federal agencies, as well as faith-based organizations was phenomenal. Major kudos are extended to the US Army Reserves and others that assisted the DFCS staff in relocating to a new facility."

**View from Dade D-SNAP location. In addition to the rainbow, the path a tornado took is visible on the mountain on the right. 5/14/11**



### **Our own - keep them in your thoughts.**

We were aware of four of our DFCS families that were personally affected by the tornados in Dade County. Brenda Taylor the County Director in Dade, Brandy Clark, an OFI case manager, Janet Grant, a Title V staff member, and Becky Edwards, also a Title V staff member.

A personal letter from Kristy Bell Region 15 SNAP Program Field Specialist

*The tornados caused homes missing, destroyed, cars overturned, businesses lost and damaged. It was a very sad and eye opening. One of the first things I noticed was the old men on tractors volunteering to help move the trees and remains of homes from roads. It is a town that is pulling together to help one another out. Driving down the road I noticed at CVS instead of the sign listing the sales for the week, it posted what churches you could go to for help with food and showers. As I drove a little further I saw a table set up in a parking lot with a sign that stated free clothes. The community is SERVING one another at a time of need and loss! Some of the families that I will never forget is the mom and 3 children that survived the storms by hiding under the kitchen table as their mobile home was destroyed. The grandfather that hid in his room while the tornado ripped out his kitchen. The young parents with 2 children that came home to only a back wall remaining. The family who was at the funeral home hiding in the chapel from the storms and when the storms hit the chapel the mom was almost sucked out of the building, the children pulled her back to the ground and saved her life. The disabled man that lost his home. These families will never forget the fear, loss, and sadness that this great storm brought into their community. I will never forget the embraces, love, and friends that I have made and helped. Thank you for allowing me to give a small piece of hope to a community in need! My life was changed!*